

Poole Africa Link Safeguarding Policy

Definitions

Poole Africa Link's Safeguarding Policy refers to children and vulnerable adults. A child refers to individual below the age of eighteen years. Child abuse refers to neglect, physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

Who is this policy for?

The policy applies to Poole Africa Link (PAL) volunteers while working in Africa as part of the link. Both those employed by Poole hospital NHS foundation Trust and those not. All these people are referred to as PAL associates. Local policies will continue to apply while in the UK.

Purpose

As an international child-centred development organisation, committed to the wellbeing of children and to supporting the Convention of the Rights of the Child, PAL does not tolerate child or vulnerable adult abuse. PAL expects that its volunteers and others who work with PAL have children's best interests at the heart of their involvement with PAL. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that PAL has procedures in place to prevent and deal with child and adult abuse by any PAL Associate.

Policy

PAL is committed to actively preventing child and vulnerable adult abuse. All Poole Hospital employees will have had a formal DBS check, and those who are not Poole employee should be vetted as per Poole Hospital volunteer policy.

PAL takes positive action to prevent individuals with a history of abuse becoming involved with PAL in any way and takes stringent measures against any PAL Associate who commits abuse

Procedures

African countries should have local procedures, consistent with global policies, to deal with child abuse. Local procedures should be developed with assistance of local advisers in accordance with the local law. It is the responsibility of the designated team leader to ensure that

all PAL Associates in their area of responsibility are aware of and abide by this policy and applicable local procedures while working for PAL if these exist.

PAL Associates should:

- familiarise themselves with situations which may present risks and learn how to deal with those situations;
- contribute to an environment where children are able to recognise unacceptable behaviour and feel able to discuss their rights and concerns;
- wherever practical, ensure that they and others meet children openly; raise concerns about any case of suspected abuse in accordance with applicable local procedures.
- . seek permission before taking any photos of children.

PAL associates must complete a minimum level two child safeguarding course before a visit and must renew this every three years.

Prevention – safeguarding children

The following forms a code of conduct for PAL associates

It is important for all volunteers and staff in contact with children to:

- Be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these appropriately
- Plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise risks
- Be visible to others when working with children whenever possible
- Create and maintain a non-defensive attitude and an open culture in which to discuss any issues or concerns
- Foster a culture of mutual accountability so that any potentially abusive behaviour can be challenged
- Respect each child's boundaries and help them to develop their own sense of their rights as well as helping them to know what they can do if they feel that there is a problem

In general it is inappropriate (unless they are parents, family or guardians) for volunteers or programme office staff to:

- Spend time alone with children away from others
- Take children to your own lodgings, especially where they will be alone with you

- Physically chastise a child

Volunteers and staff must never:

- Develop sexual relationships with children or vulnerable adults
- Develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive
- Act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse

Volunteers and staff must avoid actions or behaviour that could be construed as poor practice or potentially abusive.

For example they should never:

- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive
- Behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative towards a child
- Condone, or participate in, behaviour of children which is illegal, abusive or exposes the child to danger
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade

The guiding principle is that the protection of the child is always the overriding

PAL Associates must not

- disclose information that identifies families or children to unauthorized persons or make it available to the general public without the informed consent of the family and, when appropriate, the child.

Dealing with Child/ Vulnerable Adult Abuse

Alleged cases of child abuse should be reported to the PAL team leader and relevant hospital director or local authorities

If an associate raises a legitimate concern about suspected child abuse, which proves to be unfounded on investigation, no action will be taken against the associate. Any associate who makes false and malicious accusations, however, may face disciplinary action. PAL may take appropriate legal or other action against other PAL Associates who make false and malicious accusations of child abuse.

An alleged perpetrator of child abuse will normally be suspended from their normal relationship with PAL during investigation of allegations. PAL will sever all relations with any PAL Associate who is proven to

have committed child abuse. A timely report will be made available to Poole Hospital or their UK employers.

Confidentiality

An allegation of child abuse is a serious issue. In following this policy and local procedures, it is essential that all parties maintain confidentiality. Sharing of information, which could identify a child or an alleged perpetrator, should be purely on a 'need to know' basis. Unless abuse has actually been proved to have occurred, one must always refer to "alleged abuse".

Additional references

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
Data Protection & Privacy Law

Dr Antoinette McAulay
Poole Africa Link Chair
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On behalf of the PAL trustees